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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

LBJ Wins Viet Political Victory

By Drew Pearson

The President has now won a smashing victory in the political war over Vietnam. And he has won it almost entirely on his own.

He received an overwhelming vote in Congress, in effect, endorsing a war for which there never has been a declaration and which almost no member of Congress wants. Simultaneously the public opinion polls are up—something he watches closely. For when they drop, Lyndon knows that his hold over Congress also drops.

Finally, his opponents are in confusion.

And he did all this through the deft public relations of which he is a master, the compulsive personal persuasion he has developed over the years with Congress, and his sense of political timing, which he understands better than any President in my time.

First, when the Fulbright Senate Foreign Relations debate on Vietnam started, he immediately stole the headlines with his dramatic flight to Honolulu. It proved a master stroke. Premier Ky, who came to the meeting with a bad advance press, turned out to be a human being, apparently not a Hitler-lover. He was humble, gave the right an-



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swers, talked about social reform.

Some Presidents would have been content to rest with this victory, but Lyndon knew he had more battles to win. So from Honolulu he ordered Vice President Hubert Humphrey, darling of the liberals, to the Far East. Humphrey came back after visiting various key capitals.

Hubert Wows 'Em

It mattered not that he got a sour reaction in India and Pakistan and that later they slapped back at his proffered loans. More important, he arrived home a whirlwind of persuasion to use that persuasion on his old friends in Congress. The Democratic Study Group, most liberal cell in the House, was captivated. At a series of White House meetings for all Congressmen, the Vice President gave valuable, confidential briefings, with the President himself chiming in. Key Cabinet members were on hand to answer questions.

Meanwhile the President had thrown astute McGeorge Bundy and down-to-earth Under Secretary of State George Ball before the television-viewing public to answer Bobby Kennedy's ill-timed proposal for a coalition South Vietnam government. The President didn't wait even a day to answer. Bobby's proposal came out on Saturday. He was answered on Sunday.

State Dept. Lunch

From his long knowledge of

the Senate, Mr. Johnson knew that he would have trouble with certain key members of Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee. Fulbright and Wayne Morse, the Oregon independent, he knew could not be influenced. But Sens. Frank Church (D-Idaho), Joe Clark (D-Pa.), Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Cliff Case (R-N.J.) were invited to the State Department for lunch. Secretary Rusk opened up by asking, "What do you fellows want?" and proceeded to answer their questions; also probe them with return questions.

Rusk did a good job. The four stuck with the President on the crucial Wayne Morse test vote.

Thus did Lyndon, by moving his men as carefully as a commander in battle, win his political war at home.

The war in Vietnam, however, still remains to be won. More Communist troops are coming monthly from the North, despite our bombing of the North. More Americans are being drafted. More flag-draped coffins are being landed back home. And the monsoon rains, with their mud and mosquitoes, sodden uniforms and wet rations, are about to arrive. They're the worst enemy of all, and there's nothing the Senate, Saigon, or the White House can do about them.

New Movie Czar

For more than a year, Hollywood has been looking for a

man to replace the late Eric Johnston as czar of the motion picture industry.

They have finally found their man—Louis Nizer, famous New York lawyer, whose autobiography, "My Life in Court," was a best seller, and whose story of the Quentin Reynolds-Westbrook Pegler libel suit has been reproduced on Broadway.

Nizer expects to give up his million-dollar New York law practice and move to Washington in the spring.

Eager-Beaver Cuban

Mario Garcia Kohly, a Cuban exile, is now in the Federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa., because he worked too hard at undermining Fidel Castro. He counterfeited Cuban currency.

What most people don't realize is that it's against the law to counterfeit Cuban currency or any other nation's currency in the United States.

Kohly intended to scatter the currency around Cuba in order to upset the Cuban economy. He was arrested in the United States before he could do it, however, and was convicted.

During the war, the United States counterfeited Hitler's currency and scattered it by plane over Germany. But though Kohly checked with Central Intelligence, apparently he didn't cooperate sufficiently with Central Intelligence. For he's now in the clink.

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